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ABSTRACT

Part of a series designed to help community groups engage in discussion on the possibility of individual and community transformation, this discussion paper explores fundamental principles of existence which have implications for a healthy and wholistic approach to the elimination of prejudice that will contribute to individual and societal healing and will ensure the well-being of native people and their communities. The principle of the interrelatedness of all things and the belief that all creation, including human beings, is in a state of constant change and growth are explained. The process of transforming present reality into a condition that more closely resembles one's vision of what is possible is illustrated by the medicine wheel. The capacity of the forces of volition and vision to change the world is examined. The text is intended to be read aloud by the group facilitator with frequent pauses for discussion. It is accompanied by a brief reading list, activities, and discussion questions to review what has been learned, explore aspects of the discussion more fully, and apply what has been learned to one's own situation and community. (NEC)

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The Four Worlds Development Project is the result of many people's efforts and wisdom. Some were directly involved, others inspired us through their work in education and alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

Direction for this project was set at a conference held in Lethbridge, Alberta in December, 1982. Participants at the conference were native elders, spiritual leaders and professionals of various native communities in North America. Their contributions were framed by their deep commitment to native people and their own, often hard won, experience. To each of them we offer our deepest respect and appreciation.

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Eric Tootoosis
Mike White
Rose Yellow Feet

Editorial note:

In English it is impossible to refer to a person without using a pronoun that indicates gender or sex (e.g. he or she, him or her, his or hers). Since there is no special word to refer to a person whose gender is not known, most writers have chosen to use the masculine form in these situations.

This custom of using the masculine form when referring to a person who is not known to be a female, has caused a conspicuous absence of reference to women in English writing.

Thus all of the great ideas and discoveries discussed in English literature are expressed in masculine terms and the reader constantly visualizes males, rather than females, as active participators in the world. Our society's tendency to devalue the role and contributions of women is only augmented by this lack of picturing women in an active creative role.

The Four Worlds Development Project has chosen to alternate the use of feminine and masculine pronouns whenever the reference is unspecific. This choice of usage is a deliberate one to avoid the the awkwardness of the compound form (he/she; him or her) while at the same time acknowledging the harmful consequences of bowing to a convention that persistently forces its audience to visualize the world as dominated by men and operating on ideas expressed in masculine terms.

## Introduction

This series of discussion papers has been especially designed for small community groups; we call these "core groups". Our aim is that as people learn more about themselves and their community, they will want to get involved in creating new options, new patterns of personal and community dynamics, and in short, in promoting the ongoing process of human development in themselves and their community.

The core of anything is the heart and center of that thing. The core of a human development process is the people who, by their unity of vision, their personal commitment to growth and their leadership (by example) form the pattern around which other people cluster as positive changes take place in the community.

The Four Worlds Project promotes the development of core groups which will engage in discussion on the possibility of individual and community transformation, and conduct action-oriented research on aspects of personal and community life. It is anticipated that this group will, in some sense, establish new structural patterns around which the life of the community can organize itself--patterns that are more life-preserving, life-enhancing and development-promoting than those currently being utilized.

The core group, as it gains clarity of vision and takes action on that vision, will attract others who will also participate in the learning-transformation process. The fundamental strategic problem is not whether core groups can have such an influence. That they can is an established fact in a wide variety of case studies on social change. The challenge is twofold. The first problem is to tease out of obscurity and isolation in any community of learners those individuals who are in some way already facilitators of the organic change process in the community. The second task is to unite the hearts of these individuals in a common vision of human possibility that transcends social and political barriers to positive understanding and collaboration.

It is with the goal of helping individuals and communities face these two challenges that this discussion series was prepared. Accept them as your own and use them in whatever way you feel will be appropriate and effective.

We envision a process in which a group facilitator helps the group go through the text together, stopping frequently to discuss the points that are made. The activities and discussion questions can be used to help review what has been learned, to explore some aspects of the discussion more fully, and to apply what you have learned to your own situation and community. Much of the material can be read aloud (either by the facilitator or by various members of the

study group in turn) so that people are not limited by their reading ability in their efforts to understand the material. We anticipate that a natural outcome of this discussion process will be that the group will decide to take action in the community.

This series is just an experiment. It is not meant to be a final product. Let us know what you think, what you liked and what you didn't, and what helped you learn and what didn't. During the next year we hope to develop a set of video tapes to go with the series and maybe produce some more discussion papers to develop some of the ideas further. We need you to help us make this project a success.

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.

Black Elk (Lakota)

The Six Grandfathers taught me that each man, woman, and child at one time was a Living Power that existed somewhere in time and space. These Powers were without form, but they were aware. They were alive.

Each Power possessed boundless energy and beauty. These living Medicine Wheels were capable of nearly anything. They were beautiful and perfect in all ways except one. They had no understanding of limitation, no experience of substance. These Beings were total energy of the Mind, without Body or Heart. They were placed upon this earth that they might Learn the things of the Heart through Touching.

All the things of the Universe Wheel have spirit and life, including the rivers, rocks, earth, sky, plants and animals. But it is only man, of all the Beings on the Wheel, who is a determiner. Our determining spirit can be made whole only through the learning of our harmony with all our brothers and sisters, and with all the other spirits of the Universe.

Hyemeyohsts Storm (Northern Cheyenne)

The last discussion paper focussed on one of the most destructive forces shaping today's world--prejudice. Prejudice violates some of the most sacred teachings of Native people everywhere--the principle of the interrelatedness of all things and the belief that all creation, including human beings, is in a state of constant change and growth. It violates the basic principle of respect for all living things.

These fundamental principles of existence have great implications for a healthy and wholistic approach to the elimination of prejudice. This discussion paper will explore them in more detail in an attempt to contribute to the long journey of individual and societal healing that will ensure the well-being of native people and their communities.

Wholeness

> All things are interrelated. This connectedness derives from the reality that everything is part of a single whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

This principle, when applied to human beings, means that all races, tribes and nationalities belong to the same human family. Humankind is in reality one. The distinctions and differences which have been the basis of so much conflict and hatred are only superficial.

The human race can be viewed as a living organism. Each tribe or nation is like one of the organs of that body. While

We must stand for the common good of our people, whether Mohawk or Cree or Blackfoot or whatever. And if we compromise on this, we are going to lose. We have compromised in the past, and we have lost in the past. This is something that we all have to understand. We must strive to achieve that situation where we will be truthful with each other, peaceful with each other, unified with each other. This in turn will bring strength, and that strength will make us supreme.

Andrew Delisle (Mohawk)

We native people understand that all living things are one large extended family and that we therefore should be working together in all the four corners of the world. We say there exists a common interest that should determine the future of the world. The common interest should be, as it is stated by my people, the welfare of the seventh generation to come. Every decision should be made in reference to how that decision will affect the seventh generation in the future.

Oren Lyons (Mohawk)

each organ looks somewhat different on the outside and has a different function to play in the life process of the whole organism, it nevertheless is made up of the same constituent elements as all the other organs and plays an essential role in the body. The heart cannot say it is better than the liver, for without the liver the body would die and the heart would be useless. The spleen cannot say it is more important than the stomach because it is only a different form of the same substance that makes up all living things: proteins, lipoids, carbohydrates and inorganic salts. The organs of a living body do not compete with each other. Instead, they live together in perfect harmony, each one complimenting the work and contribution of the others.

In a similar way, the different tribes and races of the human family look a little different on the outside and have different contributions to make to humankind. Like the organs of a human body, they must not compete with each other but rather recognize the unique and important contribution each one has to offer. Just as in the human body, if one organ took over the whole body and would not let the others function freely, the organism would die, so will the human race be destroyed if one tribe or race tries to take over the whole earth and does not let the other tribes or races contribute their own gifts for the benefit of humanity.

Prejudice arises because people are basing their values and beliefs on inaccurate and partial information. They believe that the different races and tribes are essentially different and therefore in opposition and competition with each other. Only when people realize that humankind is in reality one, with each tribe or race expressing its relationship to the whole in a unique and beautiful way, will these attitudes and beliefs be changed and prejudice be eliminated. The problem is one of getting people to see things in a new way--to see unity where before they saw irreconcilable differences; to see the beauty of many different parts working in harmony for the benefit of the whole, where before they saw competition and greed. We need a new vision of what it means to be human beings living together on this earth.

## Seeing a New Reality

Imagine yourself living in a world of only two dimensions, like this piece of paper. Your world would have length and width but no height. You yourself would have to change form into a flat being, say a square or a circle, on this flat surface. You would never be able to get a view of your whole world, to look down on it from above or up at it from below, because your world would not have any such thing as height or depth.

Edwin Abbott wrote about the inhabitants of such a world in his book called Flatland. In this story a middle-aged square had a disturbing dream about finding himself in a world of only one dimension, like a line. He was disturbed because it was very difficult to see things in this new way. No longer able to move in two directions, he was reduced to being a dot on a line unable to change position with any of the other dots.

While helping his grandson, a young triangle, with his homework the following day, he became very upset.

"What if there were three dimensions?" his grandson the triangle asked. "What if there were an up and a down as well as a back and forth and a sideways?"

The square gruffly told his grandson "to stop talking such nonsense" and to "finish his homework." Nevertheless, he could not get this new idea out of his mind.

That night he was visited by a strange circle-like creature, who seemed to keep zooming in and out of sight. The "circle" told him that there are really three dimensions, and that he himself was not really a circle but rather a sphere. Unable to "see" this new reality the square became angry and told the sphere he must be crazy.

Finally the sphere convinced the square to try to see him as he really was, to concentrate on the contours of the sphere until he could see the three dimensions. Weak and dizzy with

effort, the square finally "saw" in this new way.

From that moment on he was unable to confine himself to two dimensions and to see the world in the old way. He perceived himself as a cube and his young grandson as a pyramid. Persecuted and tormented by the other inhabitants of Flatland for his heretical beliefs, he was thrown in prison and branded an insane troublemaker. He was unable to convince people that it was not the world that had changed for him. There had always been three dimensions. It was only his way of looking at the world that had changed. They, too, could share this new way of seeing the world and be freed from the limitations of perceiving the world as flat.

The cube in this story is like someone who sees the essential unity of the human race (though we hope that all of us who see the world do not end up like the cube--in prison and labelled insane!). When people see the world in this new way (which is really a very old way because it is part of the traditional wisdom of all the tribes and races on the planet), they will be freed of prejudice which comes from seeing only a world of differences and opposition.

It is after all, not our eyes that see things. It is our mind. Our eyes only let in light of varying intensity and wave lengths. Our mind takes this information and interprets it, telling us that what we saw was a tree or a flower or a cloud in the sky. It is our culture, language and accumulated

experience that tells us how to interpret the world. Given experiences and cultural teachings that tell us that mankind is really one, we will see the world that way and begin to act as though we live in a three-dimensional world of unity rather than a two dimensional one of strife and differences.

Change

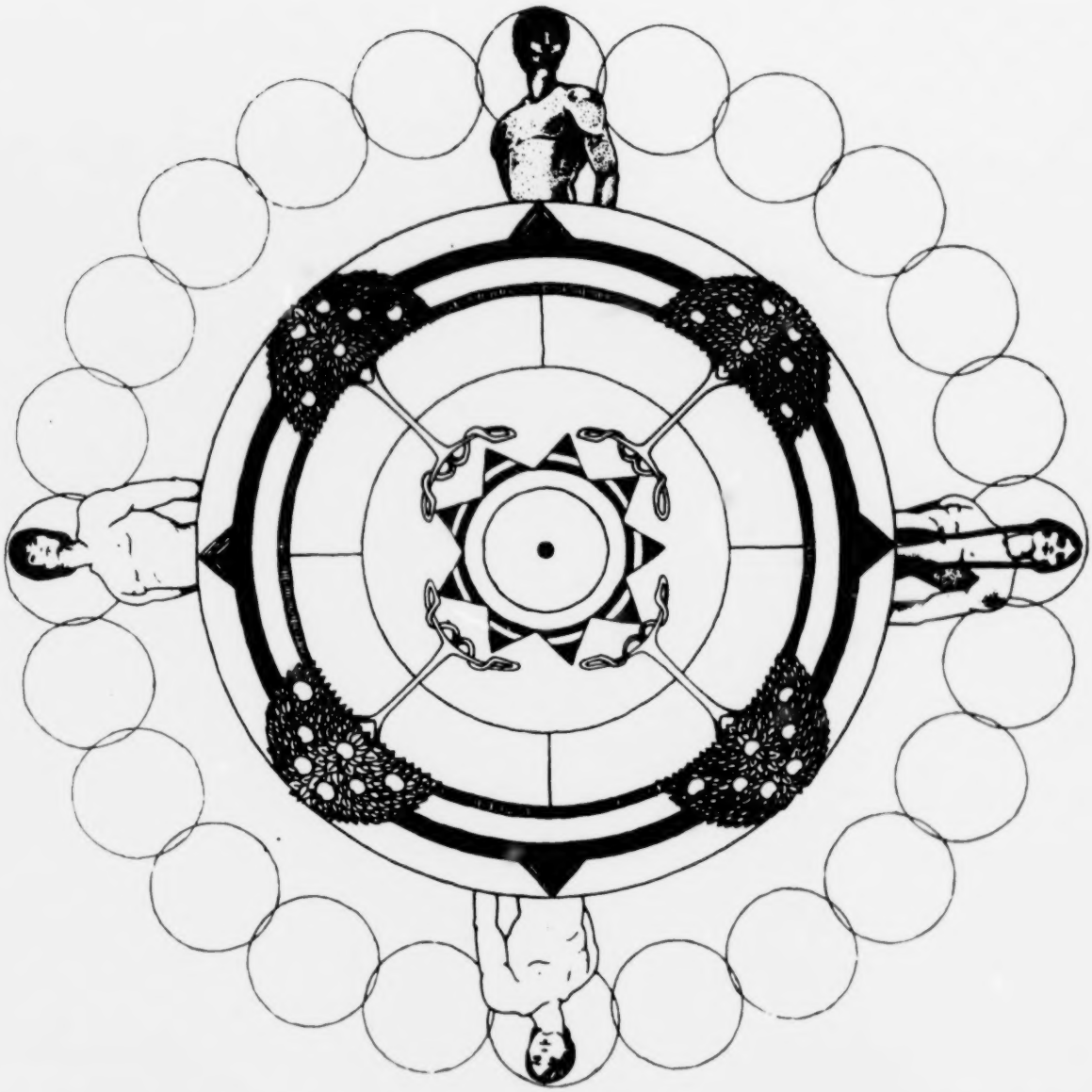
> All of creation is engaged in a process of constant change. Thus, human beings are in a process of becoming (i.e. actualizing potentiality). This is true of individuals as well as human collectives such as the family and the community. Human beings have the capacity to create further potentiality through the cumulative effects of learning and culture. Hence, human potential may be regarded as infinite.

This second principle, drawn from the teachings of the elders of virtually all tribes and nations, also gives us valuable clues about the process we must undergo if prejudice is to be eliminated. The first principle of wholeness that we studied in this lesson taught us that all people are interconnected and belong to the same human family.

This principle of change tells us that we can transform the world we are living in into a new vision of human possibility where different tribes and races live together in harmony. We do not have to accept the way things are. We can create a new world.

...For the old ones had promised that one day the great physical powers of the white man, science, and the great spiritual powers of native peoples would unite, and from this union would be born the dawn of a new day, the day of the maturity of the human race.

Phil Lane, Jr. (Yankton Sioux and Chicksaw)





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Knowledge, Volition and Action

Seeing the world in this new way and acting on this new vision will require a great deal of effort. We will need knowledge, we will need will to seek power to seek and use that knowledge, and we will need to find new ways to act that will be consistent with our new vision of unity.

Both science and traditional wisdom give us the knowledge that tells us that the differences between the different tribes and races are only unique ways of expressing the same reality. In the previous discussion paper we read how the genetic differences between people are so minute as to be almost non-existent. We also read about the fact that no scientific theory has been able to support the view that one tribe or nation is inherently superior to another. They only have different ways of perceiving the world because they have different cultures and languages.

Traditional teachings tell us that the four symbolic races of human beings (the white, yellow, red and black) are all part of the human family. The medicine wheel, a traditional symbol for wholeness for many native people, can be used to illustrate this.

Each of these four symbolic races of human being, which occupies a point on the medicine wheel, has a valuable contribution to make to the progress of the human family.

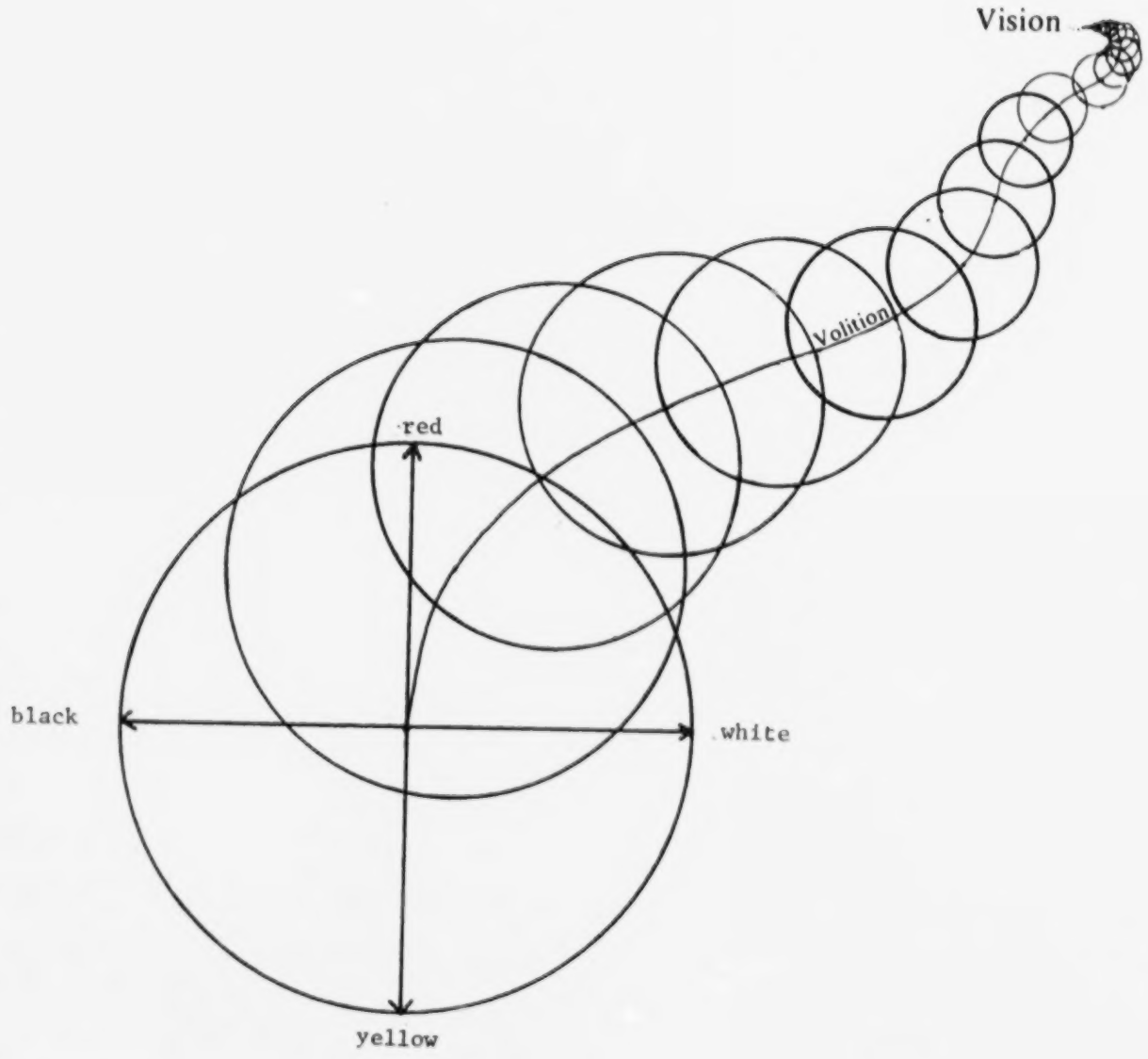
This vision of unity can be like a magnet which draws the present world condition closer and closer to it if we are determined to live and act up to our vision. This means we must look at the way we do everything--raise our children, relate to our neighbours, earn our living, care for our elders, spend our time and resources. It means we must evaluate all our institutions (our schools, government and health systems) to see if they will help bring about the mutual respect of people, tribes and races or if they are teaching opposition and disunity.

This process of transforming our present reality into a condition that more closely resemblies our vision of what is possible can be illustrated by the medicine wheel on the following page. One of the characteristics of a wheel is its capcity to roll or move. Indeed, one might say that a wheel that stays in one place is not fulfilling its true purpose.

Two forces can cause the medicine wheel of the human family to move closer to its capacity for harmony and unity. One of these is volition, or the active use of will power to exchange one way of seeing the world for another.

The other force is vision. Clearly visualizing the way we want things to be makes it more possible for that possibility to become a reality.

The capacity of these two forces, volition and vision, to



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change the world is explored more fully in the rest of this discussion paper.

The Power of Vision and Volition to Change the World

Some years ago an experiment to test the power of inner vision and imagination to change the way people act was tried in a large North American city. Inner-city teenagers who had never before touched a horse were taken to stables and told that they could ride the horses. Rather than being timid or afraid, these kids jumped on the horses and rode away with astounding speed and skill.

How was this possible? Most people find horseback riding a fairly difficult skill to learn and feel nervous about their first attempts to control so large and powerful an animal.

These inner-city kids, far from the ranches and farms where people learn to ride horses from first-hand experience with these animals, had been watching Westerns for countless hours of their lives. Now, when children (or even many adults!) are watching T.V., it is useless to ask them to take out the garbage or to come for supper. They are in another world, experiencing what their heroines and heros on the screen are experiencing.

As these teenagers watched the cowboys and Indians of the Westerns gallop over the prairies and foothills, they too felt the rhythm of the horse's straining muscles beneath them. They

felt the wind in their faces and tasted the dust in their mouths. They guided the horse through boulders and across rushing streams. They participated in the world of horseback riding with their whole beings, just as surely as if they had actually been there. Just watch any little child rock to the motion of his steed and move his arms to guide the horse as he watches his cowboy hero pursue the enemy across the open prairie.

When these children were brought face-to-face with a real horse they had already experienced horseback riding with their power of inner vision or imagination in every detail. All that was left was for them to use their will to jump into the saddle and to perform what they had already experienced so clearly in their minds as they sat in front of their T.V. sets. By visualizing every aspect of horseback riding in their mind, they had actually learned to ride.

The same principle holds true for total human actualization. When we visualize clearly, and in every detail, a unified world that allows each individual, race or tribe to contribute his unique expression of human nature to one harmonious whole, we will help create the possibility for it to happen. What will remain is for us to reorganize our day-to-day life to fit into that vision. This reorganization of day-to-day life will be the subject of subsequent discussion papers which will discuss our educational system and community

life in terms of this vision of the harmonious functioning of many diverse parts in one unified whole.

Some people may argue that creating a new vision of unity is not a very practical starting point for the process of eliminating prejudice. The following example from an island in the South Pacific illustrates how a new way of seeing things can actually affect the relationship between people and physical or material reality.

The people of the island of Bali have a ceremony in which they walk on fire. Large pits are dug and filled with hot coals. Under these coals, whole pigs are roasted in preparation for the upcoming feast. The heat radiating from these pits is so intense that it can be felt from many feet away. Yet young girls of seven follow their older sisters and their mothers in a barefoot dance over the coals. Removing their sandals, they step out onto the pit, and even scoop up the coals with their hands and pour them over their heads.

It is not that the Balinese don't know that fire burns. After all, they are roasting pigs under the coals and fully expect them to be deliciously cooked in time for the feast. Yet, at the same time, they know that fire can be walked on without it burning the flesh of the dancers. This belief, this vision of how the world works that involves walking on fire, actually changes the relationship between fire and human flesh.

We know that the philosophies, myths and legends used in traditional Indian education contain great spiritual truths and determine the way the Indian people look at their being here on earth. I think many of us in the Indian world still believe in a greater power that controls our lives and things that we do; we believe there is a definite relationship between the human being and nature. Many of the tribal priests and medicine men had visions that had some relationship with the spirit world but which have no rational explanation. Both my father and grandfather saw certain visions and heard certain stories that would not be believed by young Indians today who have not been exposed to the same spiritual realities as our older Indian people.

Allen Quetone (Kiowa)

Without this complete belief in the possibility of dancing on fire, the fire-walking ceremony would not be possible. Western anthropologists who have studied the Balinese people have been severely burned when they have attempted to follow the dancers on their stately progress across the coals.

This capacity to use a new vision of how the world works to change the world we live in has traditionally been used by Native shaman and healers to ensure successful hunts, cure physical disabilities, and influence the weather.

Although it may seem that only a relatively small group of people believe in a harmonious, healthy world, this small group can have a very great influence over the the society around them. They can form the steady, strong beat of a drum that soon attracts all the people to respond to its rhythm. The chaos and disorder around us will re-organize itself around a clear minority of people who are singing a song of balance and wholeness.

**Questions to think about:**

1. Does your tribe or nation have prophecies about a time in the future when all the tribes and races will live together in harmony? If these prophecies have never been written down, undertake the project or find someone who will. This material will be a valuable resource for your school and community.

2. List all the different factions and groups in your community (e.g. religious groups, tribes, family groups, etc.). Find someone from each of these groups that will be willing to work together for the sake of the people. Invite these people to discuss the health of your community and what can be done to improve it with you.

3. What do the elders of your people teach about the power of positive, creative thinking to change the world? How has your culture traditionally used this power (e.g. for healing, successful hunting, etc.)? Is this power still being used in your community?

**Reading List**

1. Ferguson, Marilyn. The Aquarian Conspiracy, J.P. Tracher, Inc., Los Angeles, 1980.

2. Pearce, Joseph Chilton. Magical Child, Bantam Books, Toronto, 1977.

3. The Great Wolf and Little Mouse Sister, a video tape available through the Four Worlds Development Project, Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Dr., Lethbridge, Alberta.

4. Willoya, William and Vinson Brown. Warriors of the Rainbow, Naturegraph Publishers, Happy Camp, California, 1962.